



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
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Mayor and Chairperson

Jackie Doherty
Vice-Chairperson

Eileen Delrossi
Andre P. Descoteaux
Dominik Lay
Connie Martin
Stacey Thompson

**School Improvement & Performance
Management Subcommittee Meeting**

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Wednesday, February 16, 2022
City Hall – Council Chamber
5:30 p.m.

Subcommittee Members Present:	Chairperson Lay, Mr. Descoteaux and Ms. Thompson
School Committee Members Present:	Ms. Delrossi and Ms. Martin
School Department Personnel Present:	Mr. Skinner, Chief Schools Officer

Chairperson Lay called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. The following agenda item was discussed:

➤ **Data-Driven Decision Making and School Improvement Updates**

Chairperson Lay asked Mr. Skinner to address the Subcommittee. Mr. Skinner reviewed the theory of action with the Committee and spoke about the following agenda items:

- Our theory of action for districtwide improvement.
- Key questions that drive the development of our model of support for schools.
- Characteristics of high performing schools.
- Our ongoing work to build a culture of data-driven decision-making across all schools and departments.
- Refining our model of differentiated support and accountability with improved access to and use of relevant data.
- Next steps for translating theory into practice.

Mr. Skinner spoke about what high performance is and how the district can raise all schools while simultaneously closing the performance gap among schools. He spoke about how families are informed and empowered to make choices among schools. He stated that the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) has a metric of 50% to 75% for schools meeting or approaching their goals. He stated that MCAS scores don't measure if students are enjoying or understanding the work and it doesn't tell you about the overall child. He stated that characteristics of high performing schools should be able to be tracked, measured, and improved. He stated that academic learning, school culture, high quality teaching, leadership, community & wellbeing, equity and adult responsibility are all very important for success for the student and the district as a whole. He informed the Subcommittee how data can support this work by following below:

- Ensure that educators are trained in best practices for data use.
- Focus administrative tasks on school improvement goals.
- Inform our community.
- Continually strive for improvement of student outcomes.
- Provide multiple measures of school performance and school climate and culture.
- Provide data that can be useful for identifying schools in need of central office support.
- Establish a baseline for setting short- and medium-term improvement goals.

Mr. Skinner then addressed the district purchasing a data visualization solution. He stated that in Spring 2021 the district put a Request for Proposals (RFP) out for a data product and the results from that RFP were disappointing in terms of vendors submitting proposals. He stated that currently the district is using various tools across district. He stated that we use Google Data Studio which is a free tool that takes data and turns it into informative and customizable dashboards. He stated that the performance is very slow and someone needs to manually refresh the data. The district also uses Microsoft Office/Google Suite and that data is housed in and analyzed in word, excel, and PowerPoint and Google Suite products. It relies on copy/paste methods, manual updates, and staff time. The last product is Structured Query Language (SQL) Server Reporting Services. It is a platform to visualize various types of data including assessment, attendance, and course grades and has data in real-time, but lacks predictive analytics that the district seeks. He spoke about a proposed partnership with UMass Lowell on creating a system-wide learning system. The system-wide learning system would develop a comprehensive dashboard for each school for this spring. This learning could help lead the district in developing data systems that we seek to customize to our own specifications and create a sustainable system

Mr. Descoteaux asked if they could build something for each school.

Mr. Skinner stated that it will be built out with what we want for various schools/various metrics.

Ms. Thompson asked what would be different this time with the RFP process and how long it would take for UMASS Lowell to roll this out.

Mr. Skinner stated that he doesn't have confidence that there would be a difference. He stated that we could possibly get more vendors now that the pandemic is over. He stated that the

UMASS Lowell partnership would not be a perpetual cost. He stated that we could possibly/hopefully have it by the start of the school year.

Mr. Descoteaux asked if this can be used with Aspen.

Mr. Skinner stated that it absolutely can. He stated that all the data we have is in Aspen so they have to be able to talk.

He concluded the meeting speaking about differentiated support & accountability by providing schools with both the degree of site-based decision-making flexibility and the type of external, centralized support they need when they need it. He stated that the data supports this work by putting systems and structures in place for visualizing and tracking progress and making adjustments. He stated that teacher and student-specific data are used to improve instruction and target interventions, school structures for tracking progress and making mid-course corrections, regular assessment of the fidelity of implementation of programs/curricula through classroom observations conversations with teachers, and focused learning walks to identify areas where teachers need additional support in using the curricula. He stated that the districts next steps are as follows:

- Determine which data visualization option is most feasible and cost effective. (The recommended solution will be brought before the full committee for further discussion and approval as required by the District's fiscal policies and state procurement requirements.)
- Develop a rollout plan for integrating the new data visualization platform into the ongoing work of school improvement, including refinements to the School Quality Improvement Planning (QIP) process. 3. Further tailor our differentiated school support model to ensure that every school gets the resources and supports that they need when they need them.

Ms. Thompson asked who would be at the table. She would like to see teachers, paraprofessionals, etc. be part of the process.

Mr. Skinner stated that UMASS Lowell does community outreach.

Mr. Lay stated that a custom made data system sounds exciting and that hopefully this product is less expensive.

Mr. Skinner stated that the hope is that in two (2) or three (3) years our staff will be fluent in program and hopefully continue to build upon it.

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to adjourn at 6:14 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 3 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,



Mr. Liam Skinner, Chief Schools Officer
for Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent and
Secretary, Lowell School Committee

LS/mes